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ER 9-4140

7 June 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Briefing Notes on the Problem of Relations  
with Congressional Committees

PROBLEM

To what degree should CIA deal directly with Congressional committees, apart from the normal requirements for legislative proposals and annual budget presentation?

DISCUSSION

This problem has been brought into focus recently by a series of statements in the Congress which appeared to leave considerable doubt as to the quality of intelligence reporting and estimating. Examples are -

a. Somewhat equivocal statements by the Secretary of State during the Middle East Resolution hearings to the general effect that the United States was taken completely by surprise in the events of last Fall in Egypt (TAB A).

b. Statements by Jamie Whitten, member of the House Appropriations Committee, to the general effect that intelligence concerning Soviet Russia is weak, and complaining that the Defense Subcommittee always receives intelligence reports second or third-hand from military people, and is never permitted to hear directly from the CIA. These statements have appeared in printed committee transcripts, committee reports, and the Congressional Record.

c. Considerable discussion in printed transcripts and in the Congressional Record on the subject of the revised estimate of Soviet heavy bomber production, accompanied by references to the ~~fact~~ that the Congress voted an additional \$900,000,000 to the Air Force last year on the basis of the previous estimate, which has since been reduced.

d. Following statement by Congressman Sikes, member of the House Appropriations Committee, on the Floor of the House.

"I am disturbed about the cost of the CIA. We spend hundreds of million of dollars a year on this organization. It has almost no screening or control from the Congress. That in itself is an invitation to excessive spending and to empire building. I seriously question that it is earning its keep."

e. Statement by Congressman Albert Thomas, member of the House Appropriations Committee, in a printed transcript, referring to the CIA, "where more money is wasted per square inch than by any other agency in this whole government."

f. The following statement by Majority Leader John McCormack on the Floor of the House:

"It is fair to ask what has caused us to slip so far as to be so unprepared as we were when the Hungarian freedom revolution broke out on October 23, 1956. What has happened to our intelligence on developments taking place behind the Iron Curtain? How could our combined intelligence estimate that all was quiet behind the Iron Curtain when the people of Hungary had for weeks been on the verge of total revolution? These are questions which bear upon the security of the United States and must be answered by those responsible for the collection and evaluation of international intelligence."

g. Statements in a recent report of the European Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs criticizing intelligence on both the Hungarian and Suez crises, and concluding that the failure of the United States to have a plan of action in the Hungarian crisis indicated either a serious weakness in our intelligence service or a serious misapplication by the policy makers of the facts reported.

h. Statement by Congressman Zablocki, Chairman of the Far East Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs, both to the press and on the Floor to the effect that an investigation should be undertaken as to whether intelligence failed to anticipate the recent trouble in Formosa.

By and large, these types of allegations remain unanswered.

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at least insofar as the public is concerned. Certain of our congressional friends know that statements made are in error, but have either not been present or have not seen fit to make an issue of the matter with their colleagues.

CIA meets each year with select subcommittees of our parent committees, House and Senate Armed Services, though not as often as we would like to. We appear before select subcommittees of Senate and House Appropriations, in connection with our budget presentation, but again there is not too much opportunity to go into the details of our operations or to discuss substantive matters with the committees. The Director briefs the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy once or twice a year on the status of the Soviet atomic programs. Apart from the foregoing, the Director does not appear before congressional groups unless specifically advised to do so by the President. On this basis, he appeared before the Symington Subcommittee on Airpower last Spring. The Director participated in a White House briefing of congressional leaders on the Middle East crisis last November, and he joined Under Secretary Hoover and Admiral Radford in a joint briefing on the same subject before the Foreign Relations and Foreign Affairs Committees. The Director recently declined to appear before the European Subcommittee of Foreign Affairs. There may be other requests for appearances by Foreign Affairs (e. g. the Zablocki Subcommittee on the Formosa situation), and we may be requested to appear before a subcommittee of House Government Operations, which has been assigned "jurisdiction" over CIA by the full committee.

Apart from appearances before committees and subcommittees, the Director and other CIA officials have maintained a number of contacts with individual members of Congress. Members are debriefed after trips abroad, frequently by the Director himself, and on a few occasions we have briefed traveling congressmen on our operations, both at home and in the field.

With the foregoing as background, the following questions suggest themselves:

- a. Should we continue to press for more meetings with our Armed Services and Appropriations Subcommittees?
- b. Should we resist attempts to have us appear before other

committees or subcommittees, with particular reference to the problem of Senate Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs?

c. Where public statements of a derogatory nature are made by congressmen, should we approach them directly, approach congressional friends for possible rebuttal, or take no action?

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